

WASHINGTON, September 22 - In the final days of the Congressional session, Senators Leahy and Sanders and Representative Welch continue to push for a major increase in the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. While a final deal of government spending has not been reached, drafts currently circulating in the U.S. House contain the increase the Vermont delegation is seeking.

Sanders said, "We will continue to work up to the final minutes to get the LIHEAP funding we need. It is gratifying that negotiators have incorporated the funding level in the bill I introduced early this year and which Republican leadership has tried to block. Seniors and families in Vermont and across this country should not be abandoned to the cold this winter."

Leahy said, "With winter now just around the corner, doubling LIHEAP's help to Vermont's households has been one of our top priorities in these final days of the legislative session," said Leahy. "While there are still hurdles ahead, there appears to be strong momentum to approve \$5.1 billion in LIHEAP funds in the coming days. This funding will be a lifeline to thousands of Vermonters who are facing skyrocketing heating costs this winter."

"With record high fuel costs, this boost in heating assistance will provide critical support for Vermonters most in need," said Welch. "At a time when the President is requesting a nearly \$1 trillion Wall Street bail-out, the least he should do is support our efforts to assure none of our neighbors go cold this winter."